564 other temple servant castes might come from
994 other villages to assist at special annual ceremonies. In royal and chiefly Bhagavadi tem-
[787] ples the priest was usually a Nambudiri Brahman, though a Nayar shaman was attached to the temple and periodically became possessed by the goddess and declared her will to the people.
[793] In village Nayar Bhagavadi temples, the priest was either an Embrandiri Brahman hired by the Nayars, or a Nayar; there was in addition a Nayar shaman. Daily rites in the Bhagavadi
[782] temple were similar to those in a Nambudiri temple, but annual ceremonies involved animal sacrifice by Nayars, in which Brahmans and
[252] temple servants took no part. Consistent with these differences in ritual behaviour, Nambudiris and all temple servants were vegetarians; royal, chiefly and Nayar castes ate meat. The matrilineal castes of temple servants were otherwise almost identical in general culture to Nayars, and historically were probably once Nayars. Among temple ser vants, Nambyars, Psharodis, Variyars and Puduvals disputed for ritual rank and would not interdine or intermarry. They ranked roughly [23] parallel to the chiefs of districts (with whom they had few social relations and did not interdine) and above the retainer-Nayars, who might receive food from them but not give food to them. Marars ranked below the other temple servant castes and parallel to Nayars, with whom they had few social relations outside the temple, and did not interdine or intermarry.

Below all these aristocratic castes in ritual

776 during that night for fear of calumny. There, the men
821 do not care much. We will now bid adieu to Mr. Gopal
[184] Pannikar, but not without thanking him for all he has told us about his own people.

241 Uchâl (Uchaval) is the term used for the first three days of the Malayalam month Makaram, usually falling between the 15th and 20th January. All over Malabar, [243] with the exception of Wynâd, above the ghâts, there are two crops of rice every year, one with the south-west, one [132] with the north-east monsoon. Elsewhere in Southern India rice land is always irrigated, but in Malabar there [776] is no such thing, practically, as irrigation, the heavy rainfall rendering it unnecessary, and the earth goddess—Bhûmi Dêvi—brings forth her fruit under the stimulus of the rain from heaven. She produces the crops as a female produces her children, and from the 1st of the month Makaram, she rests until the cultivator again begins to disturb her, three months later, when the showers preceding the south-west monsoon fall. Uchâl is the period of three days when the earth goddess menstruates. Granaries and all receptacles of grain are closed during Uchâl—they are not even visited. Paddy is not sold. No implement of cultivation is touched. The rice to be used during the three days is pounded out beforehand and kept separate. But it is no season of gloom; rather is it one of festivity. As particular forms of food
241 partaken on specific occasions have an interest of their
252 own, we must not omit description of the Uchâl cake—
262 the Pâla Ata. (Pâla—spathe of the areca-palm, Ata—cake). A paste is made of rice flour and water and spread thickly (about an inch thick) on one side of two pieces of the spathe of the areca-palm, each piece being from 2 to 3 feet in length and about 8 inches wide. Powdered jaggery, scraped cocoanut, powdered ginger, a little garlic and other condiments, are then put in small quantities on the paste. The two pieces of the spathe are then placed together, and they are stitched all round the edges. The whole is covered over with soft red mud and put into a fire where it is kept until the mud covering cracks. The cake is then cooked and ready for eating. It is cut and distributed to members of the family and friends.

564 In parts of Malabar the Tîyan tenants present these
262 cakes to their Nâyar landlords as a token of allegiance
466 or submission. Rice is the only article of food which if
241 prepared by a Tîyan the Nâyar cannot eat; so the Nâyar has no caste scruples about eating the Pâla Ata prepared

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464 564 [212] The Nayars are the second in the list of the castes as regards learning, and only five per cent. of the population belong to the learned professions, but they are found in all departments of public service. The community is now availing itself largely of the benefits of modern education, and the members are fast becoming conspicuous in every walk of life. In every department of the State, in all the learned professions, they form a respectable majority, and the only people who successfully compete with them are the Brahman immigrants from the other coast. Though there are extensive landholders and substantial farmers among them, a very large majority of the caste-men are really very poor, being either petty farmers, agricultural labourers or day labourers, earning [357] wages at the rate of four to five annas a day. Even women of the poorer classes do agricultural work. Domestic servants in Hindu families are almost wholly Nayars, but none of them are artisans, weavers or potters.

264 [515] [771] **Food.** The Nayars seldom eat before their bath or before worshipping in the temple close at hand. Their meals are generally three in number, namely, breakfast which is taken early in the morning, a midday meal between eleven and twelve, and another between seven and eight in the evening, but this meal is generally taken by children between five and six. The breakfast usually consists of *kanji* or rice gruel with some pickles and *pappadam* (round wafers made of the meal of the kidney-bean). Coffee is becoming popular among the Nayars, and this beverage is now often taken for breakfast in well-to-do families. They do not recognize any danger in the use of it, and individuals of all ages indulge in it, so much so that it is even given to young infants. The midday meal, which is usually served between eleven and twelve o'clock, consists of boiled rice together with a few vegetable curries; and butter-milk mixed with rice is the last course.

262 264 [272] [556]

Their supper which usually consists of similar preparation is taken between seven and eight at night. The women take their food after the male members of the family. Only a minority of Nayars are strict vegetarians, though there is no prohibition against their eating meat, fish or fowl.

[562]

252 556 [357] In large aristocratic families, Brahman cooks are engaged to prepare the meals, but the serving is in some cases done by the members. In other families, on the contrary, the cooks of

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906) 1912
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Nayar

the caste or the grown-up women cook and serve the food to the inmates who sit in the dining hall with their own dishes or with plantain leaves placed before them. In ordinary and poor families the cooking and serving are done by women alone.

In grand festivities in which food is served to a large number of the caste-men, the preparations are similar to those served at Brahman feasts, a full account of which will be given when I deal with them.

Social status.

The Nayars rank below the Ambalavásis and above the polluting castes. Even among themselves there are various grades of social precedence, and the members of higher sub-castes do not freely mingle with those of the lower. Men of the higher sub-castes may sometimes eat with those of the lower, but their women never take their meals with those lower to them in the social scale. It is curious to note that in grand feasts and on ceremonial occasions, good many formalities have to be observed in the allocation of seats in the dining hall for guests according to their social status, and any violation of the caste rules or etiquette will end in their abruptly leaving the hall. The touch of the Nayar pollutes the Brahmans, and they themselves in turn are polluted by the touch of the low caste Sudras. The consumption of meat does not entail loss of caste, though many abstain from eating it. They may take or drink water from the wells belonging either to their own caste or the three castes above them. Elayathús are their priests, but sometimes their caste-men also officiate as such, and Nambuthiris give *punnyáham* (holy water) to the Nayars under pollution. Being in close contact with the Brahmans, they learn to conduct themselves as the Brahmans do, and their morning and evening baths and their worship in temples are as punctual as those of the priestly class.

Dress.

Clothing is of considerable hygienic importance in the life of a nation, and hygiene plays a considerable part in the dress of a Nayar. A piece of cloth, two to two-and-a-half yards long and one-and-a-half yards broad, is worn round the loins. It must touch the ground or very nearly so, and this method of wearing the cloth gives a simplicity and dignity most suitable to their classic features. A small upper garment is also worn while at home A Nayar always carries an umbrella while walking in the sun, but there is no covering for the head.

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3. Goldsmith.
4. Leathersmith.
5. Carpentry.
6. Masonry.
7. Oil pressing.
8. Making of bamboo mats, baskets, etc.
9. Trade in rice.
10. Butter and milk trade.

In arrack preparation two men (Tiyyas) are engaged, but they are also agriculturists and not more than two hours are spent on an average by them on their particular profession. They cut two or three trees daily and from the toddy thus got jaggery or arrack is made. The profit according to their own version is not more than three annas per day. The ironsmith, goldsmith, leathersmith, carpenter and stone mason are whole-time workmen. The ironsmith finds employment in making or repairing agricultural implements. Nothing above this is known to him. The goldsmith's work consists mainly of making ornaments for the jenmis. He is an expert as far as such ornaments are concerned. But beyond these customary works his genius does not go. The leathersmith gets hardly any orders for his work, but his wife supplies chunam* to the country whereby the family maintains a precarious existence. Carpenters and stone masons have work in some seasons. For example, in the ploughing time or the beginning of the watering season, the former has busy calls from every family for the repair of a plough, a water lift or the like. The stone mason wanders to other parts of the country in search of work. He has no work here. The average rate of wages for these is four annas a day and one meal. Goldsmiths' and ironsmiths' remuneration is based on the quality and quantity of their work. None of these have continuous employment for the whole year. Owing to this cause, out of the two families of carpenters consisting of ten members of workable age, eight migrate usually to Calicut where they get twelve annas wages per day. They pay occasional visits to their homes, stay there for a fortnight or so, and then again go.

[166]

The oil presses find ten or twelve days' work each year after a gingelly crop is cut.

285

Mat and basket making is the indoor industry of the Cheruma women. They help their husbands in the fields in minor works but sometimes are also employed on independent wages especially during harvest and sowing time. Their spare time is employed in this industry. These mats and baskets are made of split bamboo. They are rough productions.

•252

There is a curious industry carried on by some Nayar men and women which illustrates the plight they are in. Each of them has a capital of two rupees. They go out with this ten or sometimes fifteen miles away and purchase paddy for this sum where it is sold cheaper by four nazhis (one-tenth para) a rupee. Next day it is boiled, dried and made into rice. On the third day it is carried to Kunnankulam or Guruvayoor, villages eight or ten miles to the

* [Slaked lime for chewing. It is spread thinly on betel leaves, which are folded when put in the mouth.—Ed.]

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west, and sold there. The profit of the bargain is four annas. Twelve families subsist on this trade.

Buttermilk, ghee and butter are made and sold by some families. But this is not a steady trade. It is dependent on cows giving birth.

Village trade.—The volume and the extent of village trade is limited; the wants are few and easily satisfied. Paddy seed for cultivation is not purchased but borrowed from the landlord at an interest of sixty per cent. The amount borrowed with the interest thereon is annually given back to the landlord and again borrowed at the sowing season. The borrower is bound to return paddy fit for seeding.

Other commodities useful for agriculture, such as ropes, vessels used for lifting water, etc., are purchased from the little town of Kunnankulam, eight miles off and belonging to the Native State of Cochin. There is a big bazaar at Kunnankulam where almost all necessaries and luxuries are sold. But the usual market for the village trade is that held on every Thursday at Chalisseri, a large village three miles to the west of Kothachira. People take areca, paddy and other vegetables to this market, get these sold there and with the money thus obtained purchase necessaries; sometimes articles are directly exchanged for paddy. The chief necessaries usually purchased are salt, fish, oil, kerosene, chillis, onions, and cloth to wear. Men and women wear simply one *mundu* around the waist. Hence little clothing is required.

Chalisseri is in a way an important place. Much trade in areca is carried on here. The agents of the areca traders of Chalisseri come to each family and purchase directly the quantities each has to sell. The quantity conveyed to market by the ryot himself is not very great. The selling price of areca varies from three to five rupees per tulam (= 25 lb.) according to time and circumstances. The arecanut traders of Chalisseri are absolute masters of this business and often impose their own terms upon the cultivator. After being cut and dried areca is exported by the former into the districts of the east. The best areca grower has sold nuts worth Rs. 400 a year.

The road that runs from the Pattambai railway station to Chowghat passes through Chalisseri. This is the nearest road to Kothachira people. It winds near Kutnad and thus runs parallel to the northern and western boundaries of Kothachira at a distance of two miles from each. A by-road cut from the western arm of the main road to the house of one of the jenmis at his own expense, has long been out of use and is not adapted for public purposes.

The idea of co-operation is unknown. A public road opened along the private footpath that runs between Karuvathur, a village six miles to the east of Kothachira, and Chalisseri, would be of immense use to the public of these parts. Much traffic is carried on along this footpath between these places specially on market days. It would run across Peringode and along the boundary between Mathur and Kothachira and thus benefit all these desams.

Economic condition of village.—The economic condition of this desam is rather discouraging. The people are deep in debt, are overworked and underfed and ground down by a double tyranny, the tyranny of the landlord who is also the money-lender, and the tyranny of deep-rooted custom in all their lives and walks.